

Cache Conservation News Summer, 2001

*A newsletter of the Blacksmith Fork and North Cache Soil Conservation
Districts*

Every day is Earth Day for Farmers and Ranchers

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

*By Gordon Zilles, Chairman
Blacksmith Fork Soil Conservation District*

Utah legislators provided special protection to the state's agricultural lands when they passed the Utah Agriculture Protection Area law in 1994. Since then, many Cache Valley farmers have taken advantage of the law and placed their land in APAs.

But now Cache County finds itself at ground zero in a conflict that has arisen between a local city and the agricultural community.

The issue was raised following a recent attempt by Nibley City to condemn a right of way for construction of a sewer line across land protected in an APA. Nibley's action and the subsequent rejection of the eminent domain claim by the Ag Protection Area Advisory Board and the Cache County Council brings to the forefront concerns about protecting Cache County's agriculture industry.

Nibley City is considering pursuing changes in the state Ag Protection Area law. But in an effort to find a local solution, the Cache County Council has appointed a study committee to seek consensus. The issues of concern are made all the more difficult at a time when viability of the county's ag industry is being whittled away by urban encroachment and low commodity prices.

Cache County is the No. 1 ag-producing county in the state. Increasingly county residents are recognizing the contribution agriculture makes to our community – both economic and aesthetically. The county's productive farmlands and open vistas will remain viable only as long as agriculture remains viable.

The Ag Protection Area law is one tool in our toolbox to maintain a strong, viable industry. If you are concerned about this issue, contact your local legislator or county council member and share your views on this important matter.

EXTENSION CORNER

Last call for comments on CAFO regulations

About one year ago I was in Washington D. C. with the Farm Bureau. Among other things, we visited the offices of The Environmental Protection Agency. I was amazed at the number of people working in those offices. I was also astonished to find that most of those employees were very willing to listen to concerns and attempt to find workable solutions to complex problems.

Part of the rationale they used for a given approach to various proposals was the number of public comments they had received. I was happy to see that the letters I had sent were actually read and a notation made as to my position. In most cases they were able to tell us how many comments had come in,

geographic areas represented, number favoring or not favoring a proposal and modifications made as a result of public input.

The most recent issue of Hoards Dairyman magazine contains two articles reminding us of an opportunity to comment on proposed regulations for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO'S). The new regulations, intended to "update" and "clarify" Clean Water Act permitting requirements, were published last December. Originally, the public was invited to submit comments until May 12th. The comment period has now been extended to July 30 because of the large number of responses already submitted.

We are all too busy and have a multitude of pressing demands upon us. However, we must exercise our right to give input, or we must be content with whatever is handed to us. The Spring issue of *Cache Conservation News* contained specifics with regard to proposed changes and where comments may be sent. If you have not responded yet I challenge you to do so.

--Clark Israelsen
Cache County Extension Agent

Comments may be sent by e-mail to: CAFOs.comments@epa.gov,
or mailed to:

CAFO proposed rule
U.S. EPA Office of Water
Engineering and Analysis Division (4303)
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Committee narrows search for new county landfill site

The Logan landfill siting committee has narrowed down the search to 11 potential sites for the new landfill. Most of the sites are on the north side of the valley but two are in the south around Paradise. Most of the sites are in agriculture production land.

The Soil Conservation Districts have appointed a representative to sit on the committee to represent the needs of the agricultural community. If there are any questions or concerns please contact the Utah Association of Conservation Districts at 753-5616.

BOARD ACTIONS

Joint Action

- Hosted 17th Annual Utah Soil Conservation Commission Field Day, the "Got Cow" Tour;
- Serving as Cache County Agriculture Protection Area Advisory Board, denied eminent domain action by Nibley City; approved APA requests for Glen Lee Hansen and Wesley Nelson Farms;
- Prioritized potential animal feeding operations for state manure management program;
- Represented conservation interests on Logan Landfill Siting Committee.

Blacksmith Fork

- Accepted Cordell Jensen and sons, Cole Evans and Mark Callister as cooperators;
- Approved conservation plans for Cordell Jensen and sons, Cole Evans, Mark Callister and Paul Leishman.
- Sponsored Mountain Crest High School team to the Utah Envirothon.

North Cache

- Accepted Kevin Falslev, Gil Hyer, Dennis Jackson and Tod Shenton as cooperators.
- Approved conservation plans for Kevin Faslev, Gil Hyer, Dennis Jackson, Chris Griffin Tod Shenton and Merlin King (revision).

- Sponsored two Logan High teams to the Utah Envirothon.

EXPLORING THE WEB

Irrigator's aid

<http://utahreach.usu.edu/cache/ext/ET/index.htm> -- This is an important reference site for the irrigator. Data from the Logan Island weather monitoring station is updated weekly. Here you will find detailed daily weather information, including high and low temperatures, high and low humidity, sun energy, wind, rainfall, soil temperature, water loss to evaporation, and the dew point temperature. This site provides an estimate of the number of days between watering, and the amount of water needed to water to a 12-inch depth. The average lawn water needed for the period and the predicted average lawn water needed for the next week are shown.

Western States Water Council

www.westgov.org/wswc -- The WSWC consists of representatives appointed by the governors of 18 western states. Its purposes include to provide a forum for the exchange of views and experiences among member states; and to analyze federal and state developments in order to assist member states to evaluate impacts of federal laws and programs and the effectiveness of state laws and policies. The Council publishes a weekly newsletter on water policy issues, which is available on its website. It is intended as an aid to promote better decision making and problem solving.

Deadline approaching for wildlife projects

The deadline for signing up for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is July 31. If you qualify for assistance, WHIP may provide 75 percent of the cost of certain wildlife habitat improvement projects, including windbreaks/shelterbelts, upland plantings, filter strips, grassed waterways, and riparian forest buffers.

Landowners who are interested in participating can sign up until July 31 at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office, 1860 N. 100 East, Logan. For more information call Wayne Greenhalgh, 753-5616, ext. 21.

-- Wayne Greenhalgh, UACD

McMullin retires

William I. "Bill" McMullin retired July 1, after 27 years service with the Soil Conservation Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Born and raised in Hurricane, Utah, Bill worked his way through Weber State University, graduating in 1973. He soon joined the SCS/NRCS, serving in a number of positions in Logan, Ogden, Nephi, and Roosevelt.

Bill has been married forty years to Nancy Thompson; They have 7 children and 10 grandchildren. Bill and Nancy hope to serve a mission for the LDS Church.

Time for a decision on Bear River storage

Potential Bear River water users agree that the Bear River Waterfowl Refuge has an immediate and pressing need for a supply of water during the summers. Other users on the Wasatch front will need water in seven to ten years.

The quickest way to provide water for the bird refuge is to raise the Hyrum dam. However, if raising the Hyrum dam proves not to be feasible for geotechnical or other reasons, an alternative plan would be for the federal government to participate in a state-owned project at Washakie. In order to safeguard the refuge from unnecessary delay, it seems likely that the federal government will fund pre-construction feasibility and environmental studies at both Hyrum and Washakie.

The Cache County Water Policy Advisory Board, at its June 19 meeting, voted unanimously to recommend to the County Council that "Cache County support and subscribe to a minimum of 15,000 acre feet of the proposed Bear River storage project (currently Washakie).

The water could be used to replace water pumped from aquifers as the population of the county grows. As one member of the water board pointed out during its discussion, there would be no need to divert any water from agriculture. New sources of high quality ground water could be developed, while sending the lower quality river water to the downstream users.

Cub River Update

Members of the Cub River Technical Advisory Committee from Utah and Idaho will be completing a stream visual assessment and onsite survey during the week of July 16–20 along the Cub River and its tributaries. Members from various state and federal agencies comprising the committee will be collecting information pertaining to channel condition, bank stability, vegetative cover, and other stream characteristics to be recorded and analyzed to assist in project prioritization and implementation. Area landowners along the Cub and its tributaries will be contacted in early July seeking input and permission to collect the information for their respective properties.

Participating landowners are invited and encouraged to accompany the survey teams through their property to better understand stream functions and determine the present condition of their land.

A complete watershed improvement report will be available for public comment and review early this fall. For more information regarding the Cub River Project or the stream assessment survey, contact Jon Hardman, USDA-NRCS at (435) 753-5616, ext. 25 or Penny Trinca, UACD at (435) 753-6029, ext. 30.

-- Jon Hardman, NRCS

Forest Service wants stakeholder comments

The Forest Service is now accepting comments on the proposed forest plan for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. An open house was held in Logan on June 25, and a public meeting for those who want to make oral comments will be held August 30, also in Logan.

You may contact the Wasatch-Cache Planning Team, 8226 Federal Building, 125 South State Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84138 for copies of the plan and/or supporting materials (10 pounds). The e-mail address is kamurray@fs.fed.us.

New programs available

Landowners interested in participating in two new USDA cost-share programs are invited to sign up between July 9–20 at the USDA Service Center, 1860 N. 100 East, Logan. The programs, the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) and Soil and Water Conservation Assistance (SWCA), are aimed at manure management and improved grazing. For more information contact Jon Hardman, 435-753-5616, ext. 25.

Agriculture Protection Areas: What is an APA?

The Agriculture Protection Area law was approved by the Utah legislature in 1994, and by the Cache County Council on November 12, 1996. It is designed to protect productive agricultural lands and their owners from urban encroachment, and to preserve open space and farm lands.

Individual landowners or groups of landowners may apply to have their farmlands designated as an Agriculture Protection Area. Nuisance laws must not restrict normal farming practices, and land within an APA cannot be rezoned without the written approval of all the owners of lands within the APA.

Prospective buyers of land adjacent to the APA are notified that they are buying land next to a protected farming operation. The APA offers a defense against potential nuisance lawsuits. Land within an APA can be condemned by local agencies only after approval by the APA advisory board and the county council.

Any landowner may remove his or her land from the APA at any time by filing a petition for removal with the County Executive. The remaining land continues to be in an APA.

How to establish an APA

Your land qualifies to be included in an APA if it is used for agricultural production, is zoned for agricultural use, is viable for agricultural use,

Any owner or group of owners of 10 acres or more of agriculture land may propose that an Agriculture Protection Area (APA) be established. A \$200 fee must be paid at the time of filing.

The application is made by completing the forms available from the County Executive, and filing them in his office. The forms provide for the tax assessor's parcel number for each parcel, legal description and map of each parcel, the number of acres as shown on the tax records, a description of the agricultural use of each parcel, and the signature of each owner.

Legal notice of the application will be published. The proposal will be reviewed by the APA Advisory Board. A public hearing will be held by the county council. If approved, the county will file documentation of the area with the county recorder of deeds and the planning commission.

All the members of the advisory board are Supervisors of the soil conservation districts. The districts are units of local government. The supervisors are elected.

Why APAs are important

Cache County is Utah's leading agricultural producer. Sales of \$111 million annually make Agriculture the largest contributor to Cache County's economy. Agriculture contributes 29 percent of the county's gross output, and supplies 11% of the county's payroll. (*Farmer Stockman*, May, 2001)

For every dollar of tax revenue received from residential development, up to \$1.40 is paid in public services. Productive farmland produces more tax revenue than is required for the public services provided to them. (Utah Dept. of Ag. and Food)

Sixty-nine percent of survey respondents favor the preservation of open space, and 67% agreed that working farms and ranches are very important. (*Farmer Stockman*)

The Cache County Council recognized these facts in 1998, when it adopted the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The preservation of farm land and open space is one of the goals of the Land Use Element. All 19 municipalities within Cache County have approved resolutions in support of the Land Use Element.

Agriculture Protection Areas are helping to fulfill that goal.

Here's help to preserve your family barn

One of the most significant and symbolic structures of early Cache Valley agricultural history was the family barn. Today, the old barns that remain are reminders of that heritage. A coordinated, grassroots effort is under way to preserve these treasured monuments.

Those interested in preserving older barns located on their farms are encouraged to complete an application to the Cache Valley Barn Preservation Committee (CVBPC) on or before July 20, 2001. Applications may be obtained at the USDA Service Center, 1860 North 100 East, in North Logan between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Priority will be granted to projects where partnerships can be developed with the CVBPC coordinating labor and equipment while the owner provides materials.

Project participants are asked to supply the following information:

- Brief assessment of barn condition
- Year the Barn was built and brief history.
- Anticipated future use

Due to limited funding the CVBPC will review and prioritize applications received. The committee hopes to commence project activities in early August with additional projects and funding in the future. For more information contact David Barber at 753-8702.

-- Jon Hardman, NRCS

GLEANINGS

In four years, 33 acts of eco-terrorism caused \$28.8 million in damages. The FBI considers the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) to be one of the nation's most dangerous terrorist groups. ELF has posted an instruction manual on its web site for building incendiary devices.

-- Portland *Oregonian*, Sept. 26, 1999, and

--Washington *Post*, June 2, 2001

Cache county watersheds generate about half of the total flow of the Bear River, though Cache is only one of 11 counties or parts thereof in three states.

Improved land management can offset greenhouse gas emissions, according to Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman. Currently, U.S. forests and farmlands are offsetting 15 percent of our overall emissions of greenhouse gases. Conservation tillage and no-till cropping, winter cover crops, planting trees, and growing bioenergy crops can all help to offset greenhouse gas emissions.

-- e-notes from NACD 5/29/01

A federal judge in Idaho has issued an injunction barring the U.S. Forest Service from implementing new regulations that would prohibit road building in roadless areas of national forests. The court decision does not preclude USDA from moving forward with efforts for a responsible process that addresses reasonable concerns raised about the rule.

-- e-notes from NACD 5/15/01

Since the first Earth Day in 1970, air pollution has dropped 64 percent; in the dozen years since 1988, the amount of toxins introduced into the environment have fallen 45 percent; and the percentage of Americans living in counties that meet Clean Air standards rose from barely 50 percent in 1988 to 80 percent by the late '90s.

--*Index of Leading Environmental Indicators,*
Pacific Research Institute

Soil filters our water and contributes to plant growth. But it's not the soil that is doing these important jobs--it's the microorganisms living within the soil. In just a spoonful, there are more microorganisms than the number of people on earth.

--Soil and Water Conservation Society

CONSERVATION CLASSROOM

Get the dirt on soils

If you think worms are just creepy, crawly, nasty things, you're in for a surprise.

Meet S.K. Worm, the official annelid, or worm, of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The S.K. stands for "scientific knowledge." But according to the official web page, S.K. doesn't mind being called Skworm, as in squirm around and wiggle all over the place.

This educational web page, www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/CCS/squirm/skworm.html, created by the NRCS, offers valuable information on soils. Skworm answers questions such as "Does soil have parents?" and "Why do plants like soil?"

Viewers receive a worm's-eye view of this precious resource we sometimes take for granted. After completion of 13 steps, participants are awarded the "world's greatest soil diploma."

Several other NRCS educational sites, including Backyard Conservation, the History of the NRCS and USDA for Kids, can be accessed at Tidbits for Teachers, www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/CCS/ConsEd.html. USDA for Kids offers links to a variety of pages with lesson plans and activities related to agriculture and the environment.

Did you know that Utah has a state soil? Information and photos of "Mivida," along with photo-illustrated lesson plans are available at the National Soil Survey Center Soil Science Education Website: www.statlab.iastate.edu/soils/nssc/educ/Edpage. Students of all ages will become soil savvy after a tour of these educational soils sites.

■ Jennifer Hines, UACD

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Logan High wins Utah Envirothon — again

Two Logan high teams placed first and second at the 2001 Utah kEnvirothon, a nautral resource competition for high school students, May 11–12 in Draper. This is the second year Logan High won the state event.

Winning team members Jessie Barns, Peter Giordano, Mimi Huang, Erika Neely and Carolyn Lyons will represent Utah at the Canon Envirothon in Jackson, Miss., later this month.

The Logan High teams were sponsored by the North Cache Soil Conservation District and advised by Logan High teacher Jack Greene and co-advisor Terry Barnes.

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